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THE BUSINESS MAN AND UNIVERSAL MILITARY TRAINING

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I HAVE been asked to speak briefly from the standpoint of a business man on the question of universal military training. I shall not talk "preparedness" along the lines that discussion usually takes, but I shall endeavor to give you a few concrete, perhaps homely, thoughts concerning the effect of military training upon the youth of this country, in their preparation for the battles of peace—the battles of life. I am not talking about fitting our boys to do their part in war, if war should come; I want to visualize for you some things which military training does for peace.

I was a boy who was fortunate, I think, in going to a military school; and I remember, in the fall of the year when the boys assembled from all over the country, they gathered in groups about the campus and about the school. Some of them were dressed in well-cut clothes which showed them scions of wealthy parents; some wore lurid neckties and ill-cut clothes from the country tailor. Soon the military tailor appeared upon the scene, and in a few weeks we were all clad in the same clothes, and you couldn't tell, as far as appearances went, the rich boy from the poor boy.

Then the military instructor began his work, and started the setting-up exercises and the rudimentary drills. Some of the boys, when they came in the fall, were slouchy and slovenly, but as the year went by and as we finally gathered for the last dress-parade on the campus and marched with our eyes straight ahead and with the most precise bearing we could muster, those boys had all been whipped into shape during the year. They

¹ Address as presiding officer at a meeting of the Academy of Political Science, May 18, 1916.

were erect, and they had learned neatness, punctuality, and many other things they could not get out of books. While not all of us have carried through life all that we learned in the military drills at that school—for advancing years beget easy-chairs and slippers—yet I am very sure all of us have carried through life some of the things we got in that course at the military school; and we were better prepared—not for war, as I am not talking of preparedness from that standpoint—for the battles of life and the battles of business, the battles of peace. We were better prepared for any contingency and any call of duty, by the things which we learned in that course, than we would or could have been without it.

I shall give you one other illustration. Thirty years ago and perhaps even more, the police force we then had will be remembered by some of you. If policemen met in the middle of the street, traffic was blocked, and they usually had their coats fastened by one button in warm weather, if it wasn't entirely open. With their helmets on the backs of their heads, they walked up the street with the swinging club and always with a glad eye for the pusher of the perambulator! Of course not all of them were fat. Some of them were thin and some of them were of other degrees of stature, but they were all slovenly. They all looked inefficient. Then we acquired a police commissioner who had a training at West Point in our regular army, and gradually out of that mass of inefficient and slovenly-looking police officers we have achieved our force today; and now, when I advance the throttle of my old Ford, I have a profound respect for even the sprinting capacity of the foot policeman; and as we stand on Fifth Avenue and watch "the finest" on their annual parade, we see that we have an alert, attentive and efficient body of police. They haven't lost any self-respect; they have gained self-respect. They are not only better men and better policemen, but better public servants because of the military atmosphere and the military training which had been introduced into our police force.

Just one other illustration. I am endeavoring to tell you my little story of what it seems to me military training means to the preparation of the young men for the ordinary walks of life.

We all remember abroad, in the countries where they have universal training, the guards on the railroads, even the conductors and motor-drivers on the tramway-cars—how alert they are, with their coats buttoned up, and how clean and prompt and punctilious and polite. Just contrast that mental picture with the mental picture of, we will say, the London bus-driver, or even our own trolley-car drivers and conductors here. In one case, they have gone through a school or course of military training which has given them a command of themselves, a desire to be neat; and they are more efficient and more punctual as public servants in their walks of life than are the same class of men that we see in this country and in England, where they have volunteer military service. You need not consider the great belligerent countries, but consider the same things in Holland or Switzerland.

It seems to me that the great good of a universal military training is the good that will come to young men in the preparation for life, and if we could dismiss from our minds the thought that we are perhaps building up a great military machine which might be a danger in the future, we would all want our boys, as I am sure I want my boy, to have some element of military training as a start in life. It would be an advantage to the sons of the well-to-do and to the sons of the poor to start them each with that advantage. The only danger from that form of military training, if it has the advantages which it seems to have, might be the danger of building up a great military machine. But stop and think for a moment where that has occurred. Has it ever occurred in a republic? Has it occurred in France? Has it occurred in Switzerland, or has it occurred in any country where there is a form of government which at all approaches a republican form? Has it not only occurred in the country where there was already a dominant military aristocracy, ambitious for its own future and for the power and prestige and military future of their country? It seems to me we may well dismiss from our minds the possibility of any serious danger of this sort here in this country.